

March column for Carmel Valley News
By Council President Scott Peters, First District

Improving Emergency Response Time

The February 7 crash in Torrey Hills that killed Mark Wayne Thurman was an avoidable tragedy. It's a painful reminder that inattention, speed or the desire to save time can be deadly.

I am concerned about the length of time it took for an ambulance to respond to the crash at East Ocean Air Avenue and Carmel Valley Road. I too am concerned that ambulance response time in general often takes longer than the recommended six minutes.

Citywide, emergency vehicles only hit the six-minute mark 50% of the time, due to large coverage areas and inadequate road access.

Thanks to some projects we've been working on in District One, fire and rescue officials can bring down average response time in Carmel Valley, Torrey Hills and Torrey Highlands.

We will break ground this year on the Pacific Highlands Ranch fire station, with a projected 2007 opening. We worked hard to relocate this station from the far north quadrant of the community to a more central location. This will help rescue officials reduce the time it takes to respond to incidents by boosting the number of crews in the area. The new northwest area police substation will also improve public safety response. This is due to open in the fall of this year. And recent road improvements and freeway exit openings will allow rescue vehicles easier and faster access to crash sites.

My office has also requested that the city conduct a review of that particular intersection, to determine whether a red-light camera is needed. And of course, we should all obey the posted speed limits and be aware of our surroundings while on the road.

Don't Park Your Butts Here!

District One sponsors a coastal cleanup project every year, and the number one type of litter we find is cigarette butts. Discarded cigarettes make up as much as 40% of the trash found on local beaches. They're dirty and unsightly, and they also pose a hazard to our children and marine mammals which may ingest the synthetic filter fibers.

That's why Councilman Jim Madaffer and I have introduced an ordinance that would prohibit smoking at all beaches and parks within the city limits. It's unfortunate that we need to pass more laws to address something that seems like common sense, but the risk to our wildlife and open space is too great. Unattended cigarettes are a serious fire hazard in our open space parks.

We're proud to have the support of numerous environmental, health and public safety agencies, as well as supporters of our local parks and beaches. I hope you'll support this important health and safety measure as well.

A Great Place to Bike

San Diego was recently named the best city with more than one million residents for bicyclists by *Bicycling* magazine. I agree. Our region's network of trails and year-round seasonable weather make it a great place to ride for transportation, sport or pleasure. One of my goals as Council President is to complete the city's network of trails, allowing easier access from the coast to the inland areas along corridors such as State Route 56. When complete, this network will allow commuters to consider bicycling a true alternative to freeway gridlock.

Virtual Makeover

Visit the newly redesigned District One website for community information and to subscribe to our email newsletter, the Peters Press. www.sandiego.gov/cd1